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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet provides information to help teachers, students, parents, and the community at large to examine whether there is equal access to and opportunity in education for males and females in the Iowa schools. Recognition of the importance of gender equity in education is reflected in both state and federal law. This document describes the relevant legislation at both the federal and state level in Iowa. The pamphlet discusses Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that forbids sex discrimination in any educational institution receiving federal assistance. It describes the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technology Education Act of 1990 that continued earlier provisions of federal vocational education legislation that required each state to have a full time sex equity coordinator to provide assistance to educational institutions to assure equal access to vocational education programs for women and men. The document explains that under Iowa state law, all public and accredited private elementary and secondary schools are required to teach their entire school curriculum from a multicultural, nonsexist approach. The Iowa Civil Rights Act also is discussed. The pamphlet suggests that citizens examine their school district curricular materials, curricular offerings, guidance services, extracurricular activities, and school administration for signs of gender equity. Six means of taking action are suggested. (Author/DK)

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Sexism in Education

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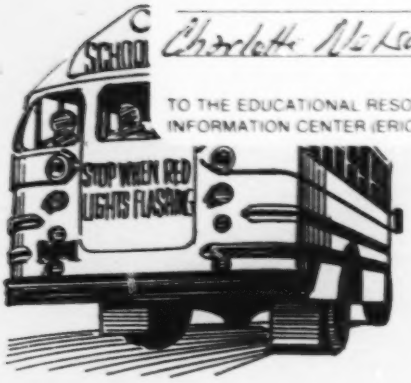

Is There Gender Equity in Your Community School District?

Iowa Commission on the Status of Women

January, 1993

For more than two decades, Iowa schools have been encouraged to examine whether there is equal access to and opportunity in education for males and females. Recognition of the importance of gender equity in education is reflected in both state and federal law.

SO 024 383

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Look at Your School District

Curricular Materials

1. Do readers and textbooks have comparable numbers of stories with females and males in major roles? ...or do the number of stories featuring males as major characters tip the scale?

2. Are both females and males pictured in a variety of interchangeable roles? ...or do you find that females are pictured in predominantly quiet or submissive roles while the males are pictured in active and adventurous roles?

3. Are the contributions and history of women adequately represented in curricular materials? ...or are materials male dominated with females excluded, or "included" only in generic terms such as mankind and manpower?

Curricular Offerings

1. Does each child in the school feel that every course is as available and acceptable for a person of one sex as it is for a person of the opposite sex? ...or are the agriculture, industrial arts and mechanics courses considered "boys' classes" while the shorthand and home economics courses are considered "girls' classes?"

2. Are students sectioned into classes according to like interests or abilities? ...or are classes sectioned merely on the basis of gender, and as a result taught differently?

Guidance Services

1. Is each child encouraged to explore all alternatives and possibilities for fulfillment of individual potential? ...or are assumptions made about the child's future which affect the choice of study areas? i.e., is it assumed that females will marry and have children and therefore need specific preparation for this role but that males do not, or that other types of career or vocational training are of less importance than college preparation courses?

2. Are tests used for vocational interests and preferences free from sex bias? ...or do tests reflect traditional sex roles and stereotyping?

Extracurricular Activities

1. Do females and males have the same opportunities for participation in all activity areas? ...or does the athletic program reflect greater opportunities for the males in use of facilities, supervisory personnel, sports offered, length of season, or publicity?

2. Does the budget for extracurricular activities reflect equal opportunities and equal quality in programs for males and females? ...or do you find that the bulk of the financial resources support programs for males?

School Administration

1. Are leadership positions occupied by women and men alike? ...or do you find few, if any, women administrators in your district?

2. Do the administrators provide staff development programs and encourage curriculum revision to reflect changing sex roles in society? ...or do they resist positive change?

3. Are women and men assigned classroom positions without regard to sex? ...or are men assigned to teach science, math, industrial arts and social studies, while women teach English and foreign language courses?

4. Does your school district have a functioning Title IX Coordinator? ...or is no one assigned active oversight responsibility?

5. Does your school district have a grievance procedure for students, parent, or employee complaints of gender discrimination? ...and are students, parents, and employees aware of this procedure?

If your answers to the above questions do not reflect a balanced program in every aspect, your school system is not meeting the needs of its female and male students, and is not in compliance with either the state or federal laws.

Take Action

1. Visit your school board and school superintendent and discuss your concerns with them.
2. Volunteer to serve on your district's multicultural, nonsexist education advisory committee.
3. Monitor your own school district for compliance with state and federal legislation.
4. Question your school administrators, school board members and teachers and inform them of your concerns.
5. Establish a coalition of community groups to work with the school system toward needed change.
6. For further help, write or call: Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Lucas Building, Des Moines Iowa 50319
   Telephone: 515/281-4461 or 800/558-4427

Legislation

Federal

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 forbids sex discrimination in any educational institution receiving federal assistance. With few exceptions, Title IX forbids discrimination in admissions, recruitment, access to courses and participation in extracurricular activities, treatment of students, services and financial aid, use of facilities, student employment, and employment of personnel.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technology Education Act of 1990 continues earlier provisions of Federal vocational education legislation which require each state to have a full-time sex equity coordinator to provide assistance to educational institutions to assure equal access to vocational education programs for women and men. The major focus is on eliminating sex bias and sex stereotyping from all vocational education programs. The law also provides a reserve of funds to support sex equity programs and programs serving single parents, displaced homemakers, and single pregnant women. Under the law, vocational education councils in school districts are to be gender balanced. For more information, contact the Vocational Equity Consultant, Iowa Department of Education, Grimes Building, Des Moines 50319, phone 515/281-8564.

State

Under Iowa Law, all public and accredited private elementary and secondary schools are required to teach their entire school curriculum from a multicultural, nonsexist approach. To assure nonsexist curricula, schools must comply with regulations on nonsexist teaching issued by the State Board of Education. Copies of the state *Rules for Implementing a Multicultural Nonsexist Curriculum* as well as other material on nonsexist teaching are available from the Department of Education, Grimes Building, Des Moines 50319, phone 515/281-8170.

Local school boards also have a responsibility to assure equal opportunity in state elementary and secondary schools. State law makes it illegal for a school board to allow "discrimination in any education program on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, marital status, or place of national origin."

The Iowa Civil Rights Act also prohibits sex discrimination in state educational institutions. Exclusion of females or males from participation in academic, extra curricular, research, occupational training, or other educational programs or activities is specifically prohibited. Although single-sex athletic programs are allowed under Iowa law, the educational institutions must provide comparable opportunities for both sexes in intramural and interscholastic athletic programs. The law also prohibits discrimination on the basis of pregnancy or marital status in state educational institutions. The Civil Rights Act applies to any public preschool, elementary school, secondary school, community college, and area education agency and their governing boards. For more information, contact the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, 211 East Maple Street, Des Moines 50319, phone 515/281-4121, 800/457-4416.